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R. O. 12065: GDS (10/15/86) (RUSER, CLAUS W.) OR-M

TAGS: SHUM, PINT, AR

SUBJECT: THE NOBEL BOMBHELL

1. (C) - ENTIRE TEXT

2. STILL NOT RECOVERED FROM YESTERDAY MORNING'S STUNNING NEWS, ARGENTINES ARE SLOWLY COMING TO TERMS WITH THE FACT THAT AN ARGENTINE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST, OBSCURE IF NOT ALTOGETHER UNKNOWN IN HIS OWN COUNTRY AND NOW PROPELLED TO INTERNATIONAL CELEBRITY OF THE FIRST ORDER, HAS WON THE 1990 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE. ADOLFO PEREZ ESQUIVEL -- THE NAME STILL EVOKES THE QUESTION "WHO?" -- IS THE FIRST ARGENTINE SO HONORED SINCE A FOREIGN MINISTER, WHOSE NAME ALSO WAS KNOWN ONLY TO EDITORS WHO HAD IT BURIED IN NEWS MORGUES, WON IT 45 YEARS AGO FOR HIS ROLE IN MEDIATING AN END TO THE CHACO WAR. THE EXTENSIVE REACTION, MOST OF IT NATURALLY FAVORABLE, IS INCLUDED IN USINFO FILE OF THE PAST TWO DAYS.

3. THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS SUPPORTERS NOT VERY SURPRISINGLY DON'T LIKE THE NEWS AT ALL. HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS ARE EXTREMELY PLEASED, AND OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, WHO SEE IN THE NORWEGIAN PARLIAMENT'S DECISION ON PEREZ YET ANOTHER TURN IN THE SCREW

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PAGE 21

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OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE ON THE MILITARY HERE, ARE
ABSOLUTELY DELIGHTED. ONE CALLED THE AWARD "A BRILLIANT
POLITICAL PLOY."

4. EXCEPT FOR RADIO AND TV, WHICH IS VERY CAUTIOUS, PEREZ ESQUIVEL HIMSELF WAS INSTANTLY LIONIZED IN THE PRESS. HE PRONOUNCED HIS ACHIEVEMENT DUE RECOGNITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION WORK THROUGHOUT LATIN AMERICA BY MANY, AND NOT SIMPLY AN HONOR FOR HIMSELF.

5. INTERESTINGLY, PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S CHURLISH STATEMENT AFTER MORE THAN 24 HOURS HERMETIC SILENCE (SEPTEL), PEREZ WAS AT SOME PAINS IN PRESS INTERVIEWS TO ARGUE THAT THE AWARD SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS CRITICISM OF THE GOA. THE GOVERNMENT, FOR ITS PART, LEAVES NO DOUBT THAT IT DEEMS IT AN AFFRONT AND IS NOT EMBARRASSED TO SAY SO, AFTER REFLECTION, FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD. HIS ACTIVITIES, WITTINGLY OR NOT, ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNMENT, WERE EFFECTIVELY USED BY MEMBERS OF TERROR ORGANIZATIONS AT THE HEIGHT OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE, FORWHICH REASON HE WAS DETAINED.

6. BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ISSUED ITS STATEMENT AT 10 P.M. (LAST NIGHT), PEREZ ESQUIVEL HELD HIS SECOND PRESS CONFERENCE IN TWO DAYS. AS OPPOSED TO THE FIRST, AN UNDERSTANDABLE HASTY AFFAIR AT HIS HOME, THIS CONFERENCE WAS WELL ORGANIZED AND TOOK PLACE AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. IN ATTENDANCE WERE PROMINENT ARGENTINE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE "MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO", AND A NUMBER OF POLITICIANS, SOME WHO HAVE LONG SUPPORTED HUMAN RIGHTS CAUSES AND OTHERS WHO ARE MORE RECENT CONVERTS, INCLUDING WELL-KNOWN LEFTIST PERONISTS. AT THIS CONFERENCE, LIKE THE EARLIER ONE PEREZ ESQUIVEL SPOKE OF THE NEED TO CLEAR UP THE PATE OF DISAPPEARED AND TO ASSURE THE END OF ALL VIOLATIONS. HE ALSO EXPRESSED HIS BELIEF THAT THE "INCREASING INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY" HE HAS EXPERIENCED "WILL HELP RESOLVE OUR PROBLEMS" SUCH AS THE PRESENT ARGENTINE-CHILEAN DISPUTE -- HE CALLED IT "CONFLICT" -- OVER THE BEAGLE CHANNEL. HERE AT HOME HE SAID HE WILL CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS TO ADVANCE THE INTERESTS OF ARGENTINE INDIANS AND THE COUNTRY'S POORER WORKERS, "HUMBLE SORT OF WORK (FOR WHICH) WE DON'T EXPECT CONGRATULATIONS."

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PAGE 22

37 22

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7. HE REPORTEDLY TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE INTENDS TO TRAVEL TO EL SALVADOR SOON (HE HAS A LONG STANDING INTEREST IN SALVADOR AND WAS A FRIEND OF SLAIN BISHOP ROMERO). "IN SALVADORBZ HE SAID, "THERE IS TREMENDOUS VIOLENCE WHICH PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING, WHILE ARMS ARE SENT TO SUPPORT UNJUST STRUCTURES TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE PEOPLE...WE SHOULD REALIZE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS WHICH SEND ARMS TO THESE POORER COUNTRIES...WE MUST NOT FORGET THAT THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MANY OF THESE DEATHS."

8. AT THIS WRITING PEREZ HAS NOT RESPONDED TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ACCUSATION THAT HE WAS USED BY THE TERRORIST MOVEMENT. IT MAY WELL BE, JUDGING FROM THE FORGIVING TENOR OF HIS EARLIER REMARKS, THAT HE NEVER WILL. BUT THE FACT IS THAT, LIKE IT OR NOT, ARGENTINA HAS A HUMAN RIGHTS HERO OF IMMENSE INTERNATIONAL SIATURE. NOW THE GOA ADJUSTS TO THAT FACT WHEN THE PRESENT CHAGRIN WEARS OFF -- MORE THAN ONE GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL HAS DENOUNCED THE WHOLE NOBEL EXERCISE AS A REWARD FOR TERRORISTS -- WILL MAKE INTERESTING WATCHING. FOR THE MOMENT, THE GOA IS OPENLY ON THE OFFENSIVE ARMORED WITH ITS CONVICTION THAT IT CONTINUES TO BE THE VICTIM OF AN INTERNATIONAL DEFAMATION CAMPAIGN.

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